

## **Gov. Ritter's Response to Father's Day Questions:**

### **1. WHAT DOES FATHERHOOD MEAN TO YOU?**

Out of all the things I've been privileged to do, being a father has been the most meaningful of everything. Parenting is such a privilege. To see how children evolve over time and to be a parent and be a part of all the wonderful things that happen to and with your children is one of the most meaningful things that can happen to a human being.

### **2. WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF BEING A DAD?**

The most important part of being a dad is you get to see a kid born into the world. That brings richness in all of our lives. But to be part of the architecture of another human beings life and to see that evolve into different phases (and you get to be a part of it), that's a great feeling. So for me, the best part is having that closeness to another person's developments and experiencing how rich that can be.

### **3. WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT AS A DAD?**

There's really not a single moment I can capture. My children have all done different things that have made me very proud. One recent example, though, was to see how each of them responded to my 84 year-old mother who is staying with us after just getting out of the hospital. Engaging her in a very loving and engaging way made me feel proud about how they understood the value of inter-relationships with someone who's 84 years old, and that they not only have respect for my mother, but a respect for life and the frailty of life.

### **4. WHAT DO YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN DO FOR FUN?**

We do a variety of things. But actually, our best times are when we're just eating dinner. My wife, Jeannie, is a remarkable mother and when we're all at home and engaged, it can be a lot of fun. Also, I fish and all of my kids enjoy fishing. We've also done some things on ranches in the mountains. I also have a son who is a fabulous snowboarder, so trying to huff & puff and keep up with him is also a remarkable time. And then there's my daughter. She's just one of the best people I know. Fun with her is getting any time I can to just be with her. She has this delightful personality, and we just have a lot of fun when we're allowed the time to do that.

### **5. WHAT IS THE HARDEST PART ABOUT BEING A DAD?**

For me, the hardest thing is being a dad AND being Governor. The most difficult dilemma I have now is ensuring I spend time with my kids and that it's the right kind of time. I have a lot of demands in my life as Governor, but I've always said to other people that time with your children is like a bank account. You have to make deposits. You

have to be putting in time because there will be times where you'll have to make withdrawals and not be available. The relationship has to withstand those downturns; and I, personally, feel like I get perilously close to a zero balance sometimes because of the demands of this job. My children are very gracious, but they've been impacted in a very serious way by my being Governor. We try and talk about it, we try to discuss how we can find balance.

Also, your children will experience the peaks and valleys that all human beings do and it's hard to be a parent and see your kid go into a valley and see them struggle. You want to buffer them. But sometimes that's difficult to do because life is just not like that. So getting to a place where you've comfortable with seeing your child experience a valley is always difficult for any parent.

## **6. WHAT KIND OF DAD DO YOU STRIVE TO BE?**

I think it's important as a father to be a good listener. My dad, although he was not perfect, was an exceptional listener. I try to be that for my kids where I hear what they are telling me and I can read between the lines because I'm not too busy or concerned about having my point of view heard. That's what I strive to be. Now do I do that or do it well? I'd have to say that I probably could use a little improvement there. But just as my kids age, I'm really mindful of how important it is that I hear them more than they hear me.

## **7. DESCRIBE YOUR FUNNIEST MOMENT AS A DAD.**

I was in Moab, Utah where we sometimes take spring vacations. I had our big 9-passenger, green Ford van. It was a 1993 vehicle—about 11 years old at the time. There were all these Jeeps and four-wheel drive vehicles going up this steep incline called "Slick Rock," and it was part of a rally. I had my three kids in the car and several of their friends—so the van was full. So I pulled into the line like I was going to go up the mountain. Now the kids knew I was kidding, but the people putting the rally on did not and started shouting and screaming at me saying I couldn't take this Ford van full of kids up this mountain. The kids inside were just laughing and I was laughing so hard I couldn't get out of the line; so we had a lot of people exercised by that.

## **8. WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE THAT YOUR KIDS WOULD SAY ABOUT YOU IF ASKED WHAT KIND OF A DAD THEY HAVE?**

I would hope they would say that I was loving, that I was caring, and that I had the right sense of the importance of family and that I put that ahead of other things. That may be difficult for them to say after having me be Governor for a couple of years. I'm sure there are times where they think I haven't done that—and I struggle with that. But I hope they would say that I was kind, loving, caring, a great listener, and when they've experienced the travails of life that I've made myself available to be with them and to talk through it with them and try and understand how to help them negotiate through that. At

the end of the day, it's the most meaningful thing I've done, but you have to give it time and attention, and I hope they'll say I've done that.

**9. WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE RECEIVED ABOUT FATHERHOOD?**

A friend of mine once told me that “kids do not come with instructions!” There's a reason for that because no two kids are alike. We have four children and they're all very loving human beings, but extremely different. They have different personalities, different dispositions, and yet I couldn't want for more in the way of having these wonderful kids. But when someone tells you they don't come with instructions—that means you have to be nimble. You know my oldest son was 4 or 5 years old before I realized he wasn't going to be exactly like me. Then I had a second one not like me, and then I realized none would be like me, which meant I had to decide how to parent each kid differently and respond to them. There's no template for parenting and no one way to do it, but because they have different personalities and different likes & dislikes, and different friends, it's important that you're nimble enough with how you approach them that you can foster a relationship with them no matter what comes along.

**10. WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR MOST INSPIRING MOMENT AS A DAD?**

Again, I don't know that I have the ability to say that because fatherhood is inspirational in and of itself. It's just been this wonderful opportunity to experience life in a whole different way than I would have had I not had children.